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## OUR SITUATION VIEWED FROM WITHOUT.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D. C. L., LL. D.

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AN Englishman visiting the United States at this time, finds his American friends peering with more than usual anxiety into the mist which shrouds the immediate future. He, of course, does not see so much as a native sees; but he looks from a different point of view, and he has the advantage of comparison with another country to aid him in taking the measure of the American situation. Foreigners visiting the United States, even those who come for the special purpose of observation, commonly confine their inspection to the great cities, which are the chief seats of the political evil and the storm centres of danger. One who has seen the country also, will have ever present to his mind the reserve of good sense and patriotism of which the rural districts are the seat. To trust that reserve in due measure and without assuming that it is either unlimited or sure to come up in time, is rational. To trust the luck of the Republic, is not rational. When was confidence blinder than at the time at which the rapids were drawing irresistibly towards the gulf of civil war?

There is no denying the ominous character of the last session of Congress, or the sinister significance of the general sense of relief evidently felt at the departure of the assembly which has the destinies of the nation in its trust. The session threw a strong light on the weak points of the American, or Presidential and Congressional system, in contrast with the Parliamentary system of Great Britain. With a responsible Ministry, such as initiates and controls legislation in the British Parliament, Congress could not have become a chaos. The Ministry would have appealed to the allegiance of its supporters, and if, with their votes, it could not control legislation, it would have given way to a government

which could. We have often occasion to remark that the framers of the American Constitution did not understand the British system of Parliamentary government. The British did not understand it themselves. They were mystified by the forms of a monarchy, and fancied that the government was still in the crown. Nor have they yet got clear of the illusion; they recklessly extend the franchise in the belief that they have a stable government in the crown.

The largeness of the Democratic majority in Congress also contributed to its unruliness. The Republican majority in the next Congress will be liable to the same danger from the same cause. If party government is to work well, the two teams will have to be kept, as in a foot-ball match, pretty equal, or with only a working majority on one side.

On another weak point in the American system a strong light has been thrown by the continuance in session of a House of Representatives after the defeat of its party at the polls. The framers of the Constitution, when they adopted this dovetailing arrangement did not contemplate party, or provide for its action on the legislature. Washington took it for a transient disease, which might be cured by putting Hamilton and Jefferson together into the cabinet. The disadvantages of the arrangement seem now to be acknowledged by all,—yet nobody speaks of a constitutional amendment. The constitution, with its sacred stability, is an inestimable bulwark, especially in stormy times, but its amendment, even when plainly required, is certainly difficult in the extreme. No pressure seems sufficient for the purpose except that which was generated by the Civil War. Even a change of the inauguration day, such as would save the President from riding through snow and sleet, appears to be regarded as practically impossible, because it would involve a constitutional amendment.

Liability to deadlock from the division of the legislative power between two bodies which may at the time be in the hands of opposite parties, is not peculiar to the American polity. It is the general infirmity of the bicameral system when combined with that of party, and must be taken with the advantages of the system in which it inheres.

It must be owned that the American system has, of late, been severely tried. In the midst of a great financial crisis Congress

was called upon to revolutionize the fiscal and commercial policy of the nation. This, it was said, was necessary as the fulfilment of election pledges. When a surgeon who has set out to perform a dangerous operation, finds the patient in a high fever, though he may have brought his instruments with him, does he not stay his hand? An attack on the whole fiscal system was sure to combine all the protected interests in a desperate defense, and to bring on a conflict by which the financial crisis could hardly fail to be aggravated and prolonged.

The worst part of the matter is the catastrophe of the Senate, to which Englishmen, who feel the necessity of a second chamber as a security for rational conservatism, have of late been pointing as an example. But the fault lies largely in a peculiarity of the American Senate, which English reformers would not reproduce. I mean that provision, a relic of the original jealousy and necessity for a compromise among the independent colonies for the sake of union, which gives Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, Montana and Wyoming, a representation in the Senate equal to that of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

At the same time we have had in the dire influence of the Silver Mine, especially in the Senate, an awful warning of the force which under the system of party government, and when parties are evenly balanced, special interests, disregarding every object but their own, may exert. This evil is growing everywhere, and calls for the earnest consideration of statesmen and of writers on political science.

Another element of critical change which begins to show itself is the disintegration of party. This is sure to ensue when great lines of division, such as that between slavery and free labor no longer exist and sectional or personal tendencies come into free play. In France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and even in England, disintegration and sectionalism have already set in. In France the formation of a stable government has become almost hopeless. The huge see-saw of the last two Congressional elections indicates the existence on a large scale of an unattached vote.

If the sugar trust did half what it is said to have done, the execution of its managers in front of the capitol would be a measure at once salutary and just. When the public conscience succumbs to corruption all is lost. But one who has been long in the United States will be cautious in giving ear to general reports

of corruption. That it prevails in some of the State legislatures and in the governments of great cities is too evident. But critics, usually severe, say that there are very few members of Congress who would take a bribe. The civil service of the nation is admitted, notwithstanding the dangerous smallness of the salaries, to be pure. Jurymen, in the rougher States, we are told, are sometimes bought, but of the integrity of the judges one hears no complaint. The day of Barnard and Cardozo is long past. On the honor of West Point there is as yet no stain. Presidents seem to have given effect to the Civil Service Act about as far as party necessities would permit. In the intervals between great issues, party organizations can be held together only by workers who must in some way be paid. The root and branch advocates of civil service reform are the Mugwumps, who are outside party, and on whom its necessities do not press. It must be owned, however, that the tendency of the popular government to corruption is a mournful fact. In England, hitherto, Parliament has been a house of gentlemen, fortified against corruption by their wealth. The flagrant corruption of the last century had special causes and ended with the victory of Pitt over the Coalition; though the patronage, which was rich and splendid, including bishoprics, governorships, judicial appointments and peerages, dispensed as a party fund, continued to be a main support of government. That United States Senatorships are bought is freely alleged.

Fraud in elections appears to be too common, and the practice of deciding contested elections by a party vote in Congress, discarded by England more than a century ago, shelters and fosters this great crime.

The Southerners were statesmen after their kind. They held their seats in Congress, so long as they were faithful to Slavery, by a secure tenure and were able, like the British aristocracy, to train themselves and devote their lives to public affairs. They and their party managed, after their fashion, to govern the country. Who, or what is to govern it now, is the question which one hears more often asked than answered. There is a general cry for leadership, but where are the leaders to be found or how are they to be made? In England, under the guise of popular election, we have hitherto had the rule of a wealthy and leisured class. We are now going to try what sort of rule universal suffrage and pay-

ment of members will give the nation, and not the nation alone, but the Empire.

On the other hand, there has surely been an improvement in the character of the political press, and in its influence on public life. What is behind the press, it is true, is a momentous question, one of the most momentous questions of the day. Among other influences, that of certain nationalities is evidently strong. But in knowledge, literary ability and instructiveness, at all events, the improvement can hardly be denied, and a journal, whether its own morality be sound or not, must always appeal to moral principles and thus confirm public allegiance to them. The multiplication of great journals precludes a monopoly of opinion, though, on the other hand, desperate expedients may be prompted by the increased struggle for circulation.

The beneficial action of the universities on politics by disseminating political knowledge and, still more, perhaps, by diffusing a scientific spirit in opposition to that of faction and passion, is another item on the right side of the account. Only let the universities take care that they do not overpeople themselves. There is a rush into them, owing to the ambitious taste for what are supposed to be the higher callings, such as may some day give birth to an academically educated body of unemployed which will be not only unhappy but dangerous to the State.

The Common Schools are the reputed sheet-anchor of the commonwealth. Does the anchor hold? A remarkable series of reports drawn up by Dr. J. M. Rice after a tour of inspection, and recently published, throws some doubt on the quality of the instruction. The statistics of truancy, also, would lead us to doubt whether the dangerous classes, whose education and civilization are the principal warrant for the assumption of a parental duty by the State, and for the school tax, are really in school. But the most anxious eyes, after all, must be turned to the moral basis of the system. Character is the great object in the training of the citizen as well as in that of the man, and for this the common school system has no visible instrument or motive power beyond the discipline of the school-house which, as frequent suits against the schoolmasters for punishing pupils show, it is sometimes difficult for the teacher unclothed with parental authority to enforce. The one doctrine of a moral or a social kind instilled by the system is the duty of rising in life. We cannot

all climb over each other's heads, but we can all be made to feel that it is a mistake to be contented with the station in which we are born. The original New England school was religious and, as the group of families was small and closely united, it was probably not unparental. The extensive employment of women as teachers also is said, not without probability, to be unfavorable to the formation of manly character in the boys. These are the roots of the national tree, and they must not be left out of sight in taking account of the political situation.

Complaints are heard of the failure of national spirit, and of the prevalence of local over national interests and aspirations. "We are no longer a nation, we are a set of cabbage grounds and potato plots," was the wail of a patriot, incensed either by the predominance of some local interest in the tariff question, or by the failure of the American Government, under local pressure, to take the part of its own railways against their Canadian enemy. Those who witnessed the intense display of national spirit at the time of the Civil War, must certainly be struck by its comparative languor now. The Canadian question, and the question of Newfoundland, which carries with it the mouth of the St. Lawrence, have come to a head, and been left to settle themselves with as little attention on the part of the American Government and people as though their scene had been the planet Mars. Hawaii has forced itself upon notice, and in that case there has been also the stimulating suspicion of British designs. But the tide of patriotism has its ebbs as well as its flows, and the party of national aspiration is at present out of power. The revival of interest in national objects abroad, when the hour for it arrives, will be salutary as a diversion from the narrowness and bitterness of the war of factions at home.

Municipal corruption is flagrant and apparently desperate enough. But its seat is in great cities. Of the rural municipalities little complaint is heard. The village fund is small; the rural taxpayer is close-fisted and watchful; the business is light, and such as there is no difficulty in finding respectable citizens to undertake; the people know each other and can combine for a good choice. In a great city these conditions are reversed. The fund is very large, and the temptation to stealing great, while there is nobody to keep close watch; the business is very heavy, and leading men will not leave their own avocations to undertake

it, nor will they willingly throw themselves into the muddy vortex of popular elections ; the citizens know nothing of each other and are totally unable to combine for a good choice, so that the elections inevitably fall into the hands of ringsters, who find in municipal politics a regular and lucrative trade. Moreover, the incidence of city taxation is divorced from the control. The few pay the taxes, while the expenditure is at the will of the many, who get much of their small contributions as taxpayers back in the school fee ; an arrangement which would soon be fatal to any joint stock corporation. Elective government for American cities is admitted to have failed, and the failure arises apparently from causes inherent in the system, and of which the operation is only suspended for a moment by a spasmodic effort of reform, or the fleeting ascendancy of some heaven-sent Mayor. Washington, governed as the federal capital by three Commissioners appointed by the President of the United States, seems to be the only great city of which the administration is permanently and securely good. Yet there seems little chance of persuading the masses to relinquish their power. In this direction the outlook is not hopeful. The administration of English cities has been cited in favor of government by an elective council. Municipal elections in England have hitherto been treated as party questions ; the parties have made the nominations, and have striven to bring out their strongest men. The governing class in England has not yet entirely ceased to govern, nor have the other classes yet entirely ceased to obey. In England municipal office is sought for its dignity, which ranks next below that of national office, no State office or legislature being interposed. Yet those who have watched the career of the new council of London, and noted the character of some of the "progressist" elections, will pause before citing British example as conclusive in favor of Aldermanic government.

Of the financial crisis let financiers speak. Partly it is the local incidence of a universal depression, caused, as some say, by overproduction, though it is difficult to see how mankind can be starved by superfluity of bread. But partly, as all admit, it is the reckoning day of mismanagement, extravagance and fraud. With the eager cupidity excited by a vast and rapid development of natural resources, has been combined the influence of an education of which the grand precept is to grow rich. Profuse expenditure, from Congress with its Pension Arrears Bill, down-

wards to the private citizen, must also have contributed to the crash. The day of boundless plenty and thoughtless profusion is past, that of frugality has come. I have seen after a large water party all the broken bread, of which there was a great quantity, flung into the water. Perhaps of the distress among the farmers while most is due to the fall in the price of wheat, some may also be due to the rise in the scale of living. Meantime the outward signs of wealth and prosperity to a visitor's eye have not fallen off. Luxury and all its appliances increase; the hotel menu is as prodigal as ever; the watering-places and theatres are full. Railway stock may fall, but the service of the railways maintains its excellence.

At the foundation of the State, as at present constituted, lies the family. The politician, therefore, as well as the domestic moralist, must read with dismay statistics of divorce which show that in one State there is divorce to every eleven marriages. Of all the thunder clouds none is darker or more charged with ruin than this. The responsibility, so far as it is legislative, rests not only on those legislatures which have perilously relaxed the divorce law, but upon jurists who, carried away by the generous desire of emancipating the wife from the domination of the husband, have broken up the legal and economical unity of the family. To preserve its integrity the family needs a headship. The necessity may be unwelcome, and to the nihilist or anarchist most odious, but it seems to be the fiat of nature.

Of the race problem in the South there is as yet no solution, nor apparently can there be any, since intermarriage, the indispensable guarantee for equality, social or political, is out of the question. Without a solution, however, there may be a compromise or *modus vivendi*, if the inferior race will accept personal and industrial right without political power, and if the white will renounce lynching and give the black man the full protection of the law. The lynching has been most horrible, most heart-rending, most dishonorable to American civilization.

On the other hand, the solid South is manifestly beginning to break up, and the political danger arising from Southern union and isolation is in a fair way to disappear. The introduction of manufactures, like all economical changes, has brought political change in its train, and the fiscal policy of the Republican party gains ground in the realm of Calhoun.

These are subjects of anxiety more or less peculiar to the United States. So is the danger from foreign immigration, the reality of which every labor conspiracy and every riot shows, the violence on these occasions being mainly foreign. The policy of restriction naturally prevails, and presents a curious contrast to the rapturous welcome which only a quarter of a century ago America was extending, as the asylum of nations, to the suffering and oppressed of all lands. Yet, while reasonable restrictions are imposed, it must be borne in mind that American civilization rests on manual labor, and that the native American will not carry the hod, shovel the earth for the railroad, or work in the mine. Canada will bring a strong reinforcement to the original element if she ever comes into the Union.

But steam and electricity have made the world one. America shares, with other industrial countries, the disturbances and dangers arising from the perennial and now intensified conflict between labor and capital. Yet she is on the whole less threatened than England. Her mechanics are, as a rule, better instructed than the English mechanics, and therefore less open to delusion. They have probably spent more of their wages in the improvement of their condition, especially in the matter of house-owning, and less in meat, drink and tobacco. Nor are they collected in inflammable masses to the same extent as the mechanics in the North of England. The social line between employer and employed being not so sharp in the democratic as in the aristocratic country, there is less of social bitterness in their antagonism. The American area, also, is too vast for all-embracing organizations, as the history of the Knights of Labor shows. Mr. Burns, a first-rate authority on the subject, after a visit to America, denounces it in the robust language of "Labor" as a far worse field for the industrial agitator than his own country. To this view I adhere even after the Chicago riot. The quarrel there seems to have been rather between the Pullman Company, as landlords, and their tenants, than between employer and employed. The disturbance loomed so large because, taking place at a great railway centre, it caused widespread inconvenience and loss. It was followed, after the first moment of bewilderment, by a national reaction which sustained the President in his vigorous course of repression. Its moral seems to be the need of a regular army strong enough to assure the ascendancy of law over disorder,

everywhere and at any moment, in a country which is always receiving elements of turbulence and lawlessness from half-civilized provinces in Europe. A militia is a bad instrument of repression. It is a gun, which either goes off too soon or will not go off at all. Even for the purpose of external defense the United States can hardly afford to be unarmed. China and Japan may, in time, threaten the Pacific coast, and the people of the South American republics, however they may fail politically, keep up their military habits and force.

The socialistic movement against property, which is assuming formidable dimensions in Europe, has not failed to extend itself to the United States. But American socialism is mainly imported, though the faith has found a native prophet in Mr. Henry George, at the meetings of whose disciples, not only agrarian but general confiscation, and war against wealth of all kinds, fill the air. Property, or the hope of property, is as yet more widely diffused here than in old countries. The freehold farmer of the United States is not like the farm laborer in England craving for three acres and a cow, nor is he likely to listen with favor to schemes of agrarian plunder. Still, there is in America a party, and probably a growing party, of socialistic confiscation. The income tax is hailed by that party as the earnest of a more extensive application of political force to the spoliation of the few by the many, which is now the demagogue's grand lure. It is this use of political power for the purpose of confiscation—not more moral surely than if the spoilers' weapon were the revolver instead of the ballot—that is the thing really to be feared. Utopian speculations and visions, the offspring of impatient broodings over the defects of the social system and the cruel inequalities of the human lot, may be dismissed with a sympathetic smile. No serious plan for the reorganization of society on socialistic principles has yet been propounded. Until this is done, the reveries of fancy can alarm, if at all, only as the rainbow over the waterfall which marks the plunge of the torrent beneath.

Akin to the last mentioned question is that of the Unemployed, of men who are seeking for work and cannot find it. The number of these, it is to be feared, is increasing, apart from the accidents of the seasons, even on this continent, and in spite of all restrictions on immigration. The cause usually assigned

is the discharge of hands, owing to the increased use of machinery on the farm as well as in the factory, to which, perhaps, may be added the influx of women into employments hitherto assigned to men. But it is useless to deny that there is truth, though there may also be overstatement or disregard of necessary qualifications, in the Malthusian theory. Malthus persists in returning from "the moon," to which by philanthropists he has been complacently "banished." There is, after all, a tendency in man, in the absence of prudential restriction on marriage, or a check of some kind, such as tribal wars, on the growth of population, to multiply beyond the means of subsistence. In Hindoostan the peace of the British Empire has put an end to the wars which before decimated the people, and no other check having been imposed, the result is overgrowth of population, with a lowering of the condition of the ryot. Yet social demagogues are telling the people that they may fearlessly multiply, and even that the more there are of them on a given area the better they will be fed; as though the productive powers of nature were unlimited, and the fruits of the earth would increase in proportion to the number of hands employed.

To me, it has throughout seemed that, beneath all the social and political ferment, with which the age is rife, lies the disturbance, by the progress of religious scepticism, of the beliefs by which the social system and social morality have hitherto been upheld. Men are ceasing to believe that the existing state of things, with all its inequalities, is the ordinance of God, rebellion against which would be at once impious and fruitless, or to look forward to compensation in a future world for those whose lot is hard in this. They are beginning to say that the existing state of things and the uneven distribution of wealth, instead of being the ordinance of God, are the artifice of the rich, and that they mean no longer to be put off to a future life, but to grasp their share of good things in the present. For that purpose the masses are learning to use the political power which has newly come into their hands. Social morality itself, even the prohibition of stealing, rests not upon a very assignable basis when the religious sanction has been withdrawn. America partakes of this disintegration of fundamental belief with Europe, but not in the same degree. She is less heterodox, for the very reason that she has been less orthodox, and because, having no State Church, she has

nothing to chafe dissent and scepticism to violence. Nor has religion in her case been exposed to popular suspicion by reason of its connection with tithes. Orthodox Christianity here slides by a tranquil process into Christian theism. Reverence, though diminished, is not lost, nor would American opinion tolerate such publications as the comic *Life of Christ*, which I found in an anti-clerical bookstore at Paris. Still, Colonel Ingersoll lectures to large and sympathetic audiences. Religious doubt unquestionably gains ground. In church after church, clerical heresy is brought to the bar. There will be a serious danger to society if a body so numerous and powerful as the clergy should, through the advance of scepticism, find their ministrations discarded and their means of subsistence withdrawn. Some of them might be tempted, especially if they were unmarried, as the Catholic clergy are, to find a new basis in preaching the social revolution. We have had premonitions of something of that kind.

In the United States, as elsewhere, these are critical times for society. To say that they are dangerous times would, perhaps, be to betray a lack of faith in the goal towards which humanity is marching. They are, at all events, not times for the invidious ostentation of wealth, for Diamond Queens, for shoddy travesties of royal marriages, or for building gaudy palaces at extravagant cost. They are not times for squandering the riches, produced by American industry, in the pleasure cities of Europe. Wealth must henceforth learn to find its justification and guaranty not in any superhuman authority, but in its demonstrable usefulness to mankind. Nor is this necessity an evil to the possessors. What can be baser or more miserable than to live a mere burden on the community, in luxury, fed by the sweat of other men's brows? America has millionaires who nobly show that such is their feeling. She has others who do not.

In America, as in England, and in the other colonies of England—all of which seem to be attacked at once by a sort of disease which might be scientifically labelled *gynæmania*—the restlessness of the age has extended to the domain of sex. Some women are longing to break through the established limitations of womanhood, while they show an inclination to disparage what have hitherto been considered at once the natural duties and glories of woman. They are now seeking to grasp political power, which in their hands would be divorced from responsibility, since

the burden and duty of upholding and safeguarding the State must ever remain where Nature has put them—in the man. As yet, only two far Western states have adopted woman suffrage in its full political form. It has suffered some defeats in other quarters, and was rejected by the Constitutional Convention of New York. On that occasion the opposition to it included a large and distinguished body of women, who thought that they foresaw the ultimate consequences to their sex of an attempt to remove the landmarks of nature. But this is an age of feeble and precipitate abdication, when the holders of authority, instead of considering how it may be better used, surrender it upon the first challenge. There is no saying what the bosses of party may do as soon as they see, or fancy that they see, the shadow of a coming female vote, though the consequence might be the swamping of their organizations. The press also may fear, by opposing the demand of the suffragists, to risk the loss of female patronage. When the full tide of female emotion shall be added to the political vortex, when women shall have become political, when the female demagogue with her platform shall be fully developed, the final trial of popular government will be near. No guides can be less safe than the democracies of Australasia, which are made adventurous not only by the heyday of youth, but by the fancied securities of imperial tutelage, while, living in an ocean by themselves, they feel that they have nothing to fear from the emasculation of their councils, and the weakening of their capacity for self-defence. That they are altogether in a highly experimental stage of existence is shown by the financial crashes and industrial convulsions which, notwithstanding their vaunted system of State socialism, they have recently undergone.

The next issue, my friends say, is Silver, at which some of them quake; not without reason, if the change involves a disturbance of the standard. Just after the war I was one of a party at dinner in England when several men of mark were present, and I was the only man at the table who maintained that the American people would pay their debt in specie. Waiving the question of their morality, I relied on their regard for their credit. The Silver party seems to be made up of different sections not united in their object. There are the scientific bimetallists, sincerely convinced that it is possible for governments to fix the ratio of value between two commodities, and that the change would be

beneficial to all. There are the owners of silver mines, whose object needs not to be defined. But there is also Greenbackism, or something like it, coming to life again under another name. These sections will find it difficult to agree in a platform. The movement probably derives encouragement from the vacillation of the British government. That vacillation is purely political. There appears to be an embryo party in England, the offspring of distress among the farmers, corresponding in some measure to that of the Grangers here, which is disposed to seek relief in Bimetallism as well as in Protection ; and this party has votes. On the Conservative side Mr. Balfour dallies with Bimetallism, he also having, it may safely be said, a political object. The members of the Anglo-Indian service whose interest has played an important part in the question upon the British field are not Bimetallists. They only want a rectification of their own salaries which, being paid in silver, have been cruelly reduced by depreciation. The number of scientific bimetallists in England is small, though among them is Mr. Grenfell.

What will henceforth be the dividing line of American parties it is hard to say. President Cleveland is already almost out of party, and his Presidency rather "a condition" than "a theory." With the election of a Democratic President, and the abandonment of the Force Bill, the war issues died, and appeals to war sentiment ceased to tell. An attempt to return to the McKinley tariff would renew the conflict between protection and free trade, but it seems unlikely from the general indications of opinion that such an attempt will be made. Commerce, above all things, wants certainty and peace. The Republican party is, in the main, the party of national aspiration and extension, to which its rival shows itself indifferent, and it may draw a new life from that source. But, if the great social movements now on foot continue to advance, the time must come when there will be a profound division between the party of State socialism and that of property and freedom. In that event, the party of State socialism will probably be formed chiefly of the elements of which the Democratic party is now composed, Jeffersonian tradition notwithstanding, while the present elements of the Republican party will be found chiefly on the side of property and freedom.

GOLDWIN SMITH.